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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

March 30, 1977

PARTICIPANTS

From the Argentine  
Ministry of Foreign  
Relations and Worship:

Minister Miguel Angel Espeche, Officer in charge of  
North American Affairs (United States and Canada)  
Counselor Juan Carlos Arlia, Officer in charge of  
Human Rights Working Group  
Counselor Edgardo Enrique Flores, Human Rights Working  
Group  
Mr. Atilo N. Molteni, Office of the SubSecretary of Foreign  
Affairs

From the US Government:

Ms. Patricia Derian, D/HA  
Minister Maxwell Chaplin, Amembassy Buenos Aires  
Mr. Fernando Rondon, ARA/ECA  
Mr. Anthony Freeman, POL, Amembassy Buenos Aires  
Ms. Yvonne Thayer, POL, Amembassy Buenos Aires

PLACE: Argentine Foreign Ministry, Buenos Aires

DISTRIBUTION: Ambassador Hill

Counselor Arlia graciously welcomed Ms. Derian to Argentina. He was pleased that she had made the trip to Argentina and only wished that the subjects to be discussed at the meeting were more pleasant ones. Argentina, he said, has always had a firm and traditional belief in human rights. The country's commitment to human rights is embodied in the Argentine Constitution, which was modeled on the US Constitution. However, Argentina is now facing the most significant aggression in its history--an aggression not only directed by foreign elements outside Argentina but an aggression totally foreign and unacceptable to Argentine nature. This aggression is manifested in terrorist subversion. Argentina has a fervent desire for a return to democratic ideals and a secure peace. In order to do that, it is necessary to combat the terrorist aggression and banish it from the country.

It has been impossible to maintain Argentina's good image abroad because of the concentrated and well-financed campaign of the country's enemies overseas. Argentina has lacked the time, resources and ability to counteract the bad image made by the efforts of leftists abroad. A period of six months passed from the time of the military coup in March 1976 to the beginning of the Argentine government's dialogue with its foreign friends on the question of human rights. Much violence during that period transpired

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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and much of it escaped the immediate control of the government. It was the worst period during which the state did not have a complete monopoly on the forces engaged in repressing leftist subversion and rightwing terrorists were operating unchecked. However, since October, the Argentine government has ended organized rightwing terrorism and has had a complete monopoly of force. The human rights working group was consolidated in October directly under the SubSecretary of Foreign Affairs in order to coordinate all human rights questions and concerns brought to it by foreign missions. The working group is staffed entirely by civilian career diplomats--Arlia himself has 25 years diplomatic service--and does not reflect a narrow military point of view.

It should be understood that there is a difference between terrorism from the right and terrorism from the left. Leftist terrorism has the goal of destroying Argentine society and takes the initiative in using violent means to win its objective. Rightwing terrorism is a reaction to the left; its only objective is to fight against leftist subversion. It will be recalled that from the beginning President Videla has consistently condemned all forms of terrorism, be it from the right or the left.

Ms. Derian expressed her pleasure in being able to visit Argentina and meet with members of the Argentine Foreign Ministry. The United States, she said, is extremely sympathetic to the pain that Argentina has and is suffering. She is here to learn as much as she can about the problems of Argentina and to develop information and ideas on what can be done to further the cause of human rights throughout the world. Sometimes one finds that in order to solve one problem, one ends up creating another, which is not her intention nor that of the new US administration. The US government does not want to be the moral arbitor for the world; it does want to offer its good offices to assist in finding the best solutions. The US public is concerned not to find itself a participant in situations where violations of human rights are taking place. The US has had some but not much experience with terrorism. People fear it even though they might not fully understand the urgency of it. It is hard to judge a terrorist situation from a distance. Nevertheless, although the US government understands the problems faced by the Argentine government, it cannot stand with Argentina due to human rights violations. Terrorism is too poorly known and understood to permit ready and easy solutions. Argentina is on the front line, having to learn to deal with terrorism and find ways to confront this problem for the rest of the world.

Ms. Derian went on to describe her job as Coordinator for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. She covers human rights issues for the whole world, as well as refugee matters, terrorism, prisoners of war and related issues. Most recently she has been testifying frequently on upcoming legislation with human rights provisions. These provisions represent the continued, sincere and positive concern by Congress to instill human rights considerations in all foreign policy. We must be sensible, however, that these

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amendments on human rights taken altogether could lead to an undesirable situation, perhaps restricting the flexibility we desire in the human rights area. Ms. Derian emphasized President Carter's deep commitment to human rights which she said stems from his very character and conviction. It was not a device nor a political maneuver. Human rights is not the only factor in the Administration's foreign policy but a major consideration, mixed in like egg whites in a soufflé. After some appreciation of her metaphor, Ms. Derian said it was even more apt than she originally meant: if the mixture fails, the soufflé is a failure.

Counselor Arlia responded that he had great respect for President Carter, but that in his policy toward Argentina, he had only committed mistakes. One of his errors was accepting false information from self-interested terrorist elements. For example, while attending the United Nations Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva in February, Arlia on several occasions saw the US delegate Brady Tyson and his staff talking to Argentine terrorists, including such persons as leftist lawyers Gustavo Roca and Garzon Maceda, Roberto Guevara and a Mr. Matarollo. Gustavo Roca and Garzon Maceda, he said, were the two who negotiated the Samuelson ransom for the terrorists. Whole sections of Tyson's speech on Argentina came right from this sort of person. Another person who testified against Argentina in Geneva was Uruguayan Senator Enrique Erro, a Communist. Erro had been arrested during the last Peron government. He was not charged due to his status as a former senator but he was kept in prison to control his activities. He was freed in January 1977. His testimony in Geneva were lies. Contrary to what he said, there are no shooting galleries in Argentine prisons, no torture in prisons; food and health standards are high and civilian doctors who have private clinics provide medical care to prisoners. The International Red Cross is acting in Argentina and can confirm Arlia's claims.

In response to Ms. Derian's comment that she had been told by Argentines that human rights excesses are deplorable but necessary to root out terrorism, Counselor Arlia said that information was also not true. It was the American police who invented third degree interrogation methods, not the Argentines, he said. Abuses of human rights may occur in Argentina, but it is not the intent nor the policy of the Argentine government to violate human rights. Contrary information comes from wrong-minded sources. The refugees in Argentina belong to the leftist movement. They want to get out of Argentina before their involvement is discovered by authorities. No refugee is persecuted here unless he is mixed up in terrorist activities. Counselor Arlia mentioned the case of two refugees travelling to Sweden who were discovered by a customs official in the Buenos Aires airport to have subversive material in false bottoms of their suitcases. Before GOA had time to review the case, Amnesty International was sending strong protests that the girls must be released. It should be understood that some of those in Amnesty are also connected to the movement, and use the reputation of Amnesty to make false accusations. If the US government

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uses this information on good faith, it is making a big mistake. Counselor Arlia mentioned the cases of Paraguayan doctor Agustin Goriburu and Argentine Professor Mauricio Lopez as examples of the problem faced by GOA officials on its bad image abroad. No more than a few days after their disappearances, literally hundreds of protest letters, some of them on mimeographed forms, and cables came in to the government. Some arrived in less time than it is possible for mail to go from the US and Europe to Argentina. GOA is doing everything it can to find these two men, but no matter what it does, it will never get over the accusation that it has kidnapped them. All we are asking of you is that you seek information from us before passing judgment on Argentina.

Counselor Arlia gave Ms. Derian material showing Argentines who have been killed and maimed by terrorist bombs and assassinations during the last several years. Terrorism, he said, has changed. In riots, such as those in Italy recently, students don't throw Marcuse's book at security officials, they shoot first. It is simply not possible to courteously arrest a terrorist who is shooting at you. Human rights violations, Arlia concluded, exist when a government applies a specific policy. That is not the case in Argentina.

Ms. Derian and Counselor Arlia exchanged courteous farewells and he encouraged her to call on the Foreign Ministry whenever she needed information and to return to Argentina in the future.

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